

Distorted Autobiography - Self-portrayal and Self-censorship in Gay Memoirs

Iwona Rentflejsz

(Zaburzona autobiografia - autoportret i autocenzura w pamiętnikach gejowskich)

STRESZCZENIE : Artykuł analizuje wybrane gejowskie autobiografie i pamiętniki AIDS, po to by prześledzić zmianę w postrzeganiu samego siebie, zwłaszcza w obliczu wrogo nastawionego środowiska, takiego jak konserwatywna rodzina, szkoła, miejsce pracy czy instytucje rządowe. Dowodzę, że wielu pisarzy odrzucało postrzeganie się w roli ofiary i stosowało strategie przetrwania, po to by radzić sobie z chorobą "po gejowsku". Prezentuję także szerszy kontekst społeczny, w którym powstawały te osobiste narracje o samorozwoju i stracie oraz zastanawiam się, w jaki sposób ów kontekst wpływał na proces twórczy. Zamiast poddać się i wpasować w stereotyp smutnego lub groźnego homoseksualisty chorego na AIDS, jaki promowały mainstreamowe media, współcześni pisarze gejowscy wydają się celebrować chorobę i wykorzystywać ją do własnych

celów. Pomimo faktu, że najnowsza literatura wyrasta z kryzysu związanego z AIDS, mówi ona raczej o możliwościach, jakie daje życie w cieniu epidemii, życia nieograniczonego wyłącznie do żałoby.

In my article I am going to focus on gay autobiographies and AIDS memoirs in order to discuss the change in the perception of the self, especially when faced with the hostile environment, such as the conservative family, school, workplace or governmental institutions. I will try to demonstrate that many novelists rejected the victimized notion of the self and started to deploy self-preservation strategies in order to deal with the disease the "gay way". I am also going to present the larger social context in which these personal accounts of both self-development and loss were written and then examine the ways in which this context influenced the process of writing.

The appearance of the disease followed significant changes in sexual behaviour, largely indebted to the liberal movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The countercultures of these two decades proclaimed greater sexual freedom and diversity and made more open eroticism an integral part of their social rebellion. Feminists wanted women to gain control over their own sexuality, gays and

lesbians wanted the legalization of same-sex passions and relationships. Furthermore, sex discourses and representations (pornography, sex manuals) portrayed sex as a sphere of pleasure and self-expression, validating the freedom of sexual activities in the context of mutual respect and consent. Yet by 1983, when the epidemic proportions of AIDS became obvious, the disease was used by establishment to reverse the liberal trends and to promote the conservative agenda. Pioneering literary accounts of the plague appeared at approximately the same time. Despite the fact that these early publications present the dramatic situation of the first few years of the epidemic, they will not be of my main interest as these concerned mostly medical or educational issues. What is more, due to the prevailing belief that AIDS attacks only drug users and homosexual people these texts were not given the critical attention they deserve. And although David Bergman, the editor of the collections of short stories called *Men on Men* claims that since the introduction of more effective medicines and gathering reliable data on the pandemic the public perception of AIDS changed, the situation is still unsatisfactory. Despite the fact that the decrease in the number of people dying from AIDS is directly proportional to the literary interest in the subject and that a lot of writers decided to get over the grief and the suffering and explore what has happened to them, writing about the pandemic remains difficult. Joseph Dewey seems to be thinking along the same lines and I think it is worth

quoting his argument in length:

As a literary genre, this body of plague literature, of course, has little promise - there is no aesthetic beauty in the caved-in, yellowed faces and skeletal figures in AIDS hospices; a viral infection of this scale creates not the elegant individuality of heroes but rather an overwhelming anonymity of victims, interred within statistics; the plot must operate without the drive of suspense, propelled only by the grind of the inevitability; there can be no moral - save that the virus blindly, stupidly destroys what gives it life. (...) It resists the grateful transmutation into metaphor that has long been the aesthetic privilege of those writers who dare to work within the dark sphere of illness that destroys the young. (Dewey 24)

This article will be devoted entirely to the influence of AIDS on selected contemporary gay writers and their works, and on autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical texts in particular. Although there are many interesting novels, such as Alice Hoffman's *At Risk*, which describe the impact of AIDS on the heterosexual part of society, I decided to narrow the material down and concentrate on those who are in the very inferno of the pandemic and who were stigmatized as those responsible for the emergence of the illness. Also, I am going to focus on male-authored texts, as homosexual men were the first victims of the disease and the lesbian

text tackling the problem was unavailable. I am not claiming here that AIDS is merely a gay disease, although such a belief seems to be shared by many individuals who decided to ignore the fact that it may affect practically everybody. Yet the non-gay texts focus mainly on what might be called the *melodramatic* issue, that is on the extraction of sympathy towards the "innocent AIDS victims" (in this context "innocent" means those who got infected through blood transfusions) from general population. This melodramatic mood stems from the long tradition of sentimentality and Hoffman's novel, about an 11-year-old middle-class girl who is a promising gymnast, and who contracts AIDS from a blood transfusion during the emergency appendectomy fits the tradition well. The protagonist of the novel is, indeed, a victim, and the scene in which, shortly after she has been diagnosed, she has her teeth braces removed and she comments, with tears in her eyes, that has she lived she "would have been beautiful," lets us, the readers, feel anger and sorrow at the illness' irrational stroke. The book, however, despite significant sales, was criticized for making AIDS "too reader-friendly" and for ignoring the tensions caused by the disease on the margins of the middle-class society, such as educational institutions, workplaces and neighborhood.

Yet if we decide to focus on gay communities instead, we will discover that there are many other important issues involved in the

process of writing about the disease. Most importantly, however, AIDS appears to be framed by a cultural and political agenda, due to which medical data are often misinterpreted and statistics manipulated. Simon Watney believes that misreporting on the very scale of the epidemic and on the number of non-gay individuals involved has characterized AIDS from the earliest days of its discovery and was caused by the belief that the gay community deserved a punishment for their promiscuous lifestyle. He claims that, at the beginning of the pandemic, governments were reluctant to put any money into research aimed at destroying the virus or into an information campaign and traces the sources of this reluctance to homophobia. The "general public (or population)," defined as a homogenous entity divided into family units (although one may also add other criteria, such as white, middle-class and heterosexual) was continually warned against hazardous sexual practices, with a lot of emphasis being placed on "risk groups" and "sexual minorities". Furthermore, following on from the pre-modern belief that the deformations of the body reflect the bodily sins and flaws in character (consider here the gradual distortion of the picture, which echoes Dorian Gray's crimes or the ugliness of Mister Hyde), AIDS has frequently been read as a visible sign of moral depravity and, in consequence, as a punishment. Therefore, if we decide to focus on gay writers, we will discover that there are more important issues involved than a mere plea for sympathy: gay communities,

faced with such an attitude on the part of the rest of the society, have been in the situation in which they have had to emotionally deal both with their private suffering and social prejudice. The best media in which they have been able to react to the reality which surrounds them is the written word.

Although the task of analyzing personal tragedies for literary purposes may appear daunting, I intend to continue with it, agreeing with Paul Monette's conviction that such stories should no longer die with their authors - they may prove useful to other people struggling with the overwhelming feeling of loss. There is one more reason not to silence the AIDS narratives - if they are constantly discussed, used and then re-used they will no longer be considered marginal phenomena or reports of a handful of individuals suffering from the unpopular disease. As Susan Sontag observed: "with this illness, one that elicits so much guilt and shame, the effort to detach it from these meanings, these metaphors, seems particularly liberating, even consoling. But the metaphors cannot be distanced just by abstaining from them. They have to be exposed, criticized, elaborated, used up" (*AIDS and its Metaphors*, 182). Therefore, more and more contemporary gay writers feel the need to tell their stories, if not as consolation to themselves, then to others. Yet not everybody seems to share this view. At the other extreme there are writers who make a conscious effort *not to* mention AIDS in their

writing, although it is obvious that the disease lurks somewhere in between the lines. This might be true for Alan Hollinghurst, whose *Swimming Pool Library* is set in the late eighties, the time when the disease first struck, yet it describes lusty celebrations of pre-AIDS freedoms, as if the epidemic never happened. *The Folding Star*, on the other hand, does refer to the problem, but in a very indirect manner: when Dawn, a marginal character is first mentioned, we find out that he "is looking fit and got nice and brown; and he has put on a bit of weight. The AZT seems to have made him rather hilarious" (*The Folding Star*, 152). Only after realizing that AZT is one of the medicines used in AIDS therapy to strengthen the immune system is the connection with HIV obvious. But Hollinghurst does not stop here - in order to avoid the necessity of describing the gradual deterioration of his protagonist's mind and body he has the character die in a car crash, not of AIDS.

At this point it would be interesting to examine the metaphors which are available to the contemporary gay writers who did decide to tackle the problem of the pandemic. In *AIDS and its Metaphors* Susan Sontag observes that those who previously wrote about various illnesses frequently applied military metaphors through which "disease was seen as an invasion of alien organisms, to which the body responds by its own military operations, such as mobilizing of immunological 'defenses'" (Sontag, 97). The most frequently

applied "war on AIDS" metaphor emerged in the mid-1980s and was repeated, both in literature and journalism of the decade, mainly to initiate some collective action against the disease. The term became popular in the mainstream media, reporting and editorial comments, but it also conquered the earliest AIDS-related writing, which becomes evident even after examining the titles of some novels, such as Larry Kramer's *Reports from the Holocaust* or Andrew Holleran's *Ground Zero*. Yet the very term *war* implies the existence of some enemies or allies, who (or which) were difficult to define in the case of viral infection. Therefore, since the most obvious enemy, the viral agent, remained invisible, the war against AIDS was directed against the bodies of the disease's victims, the groups of those who fell ill. In this case the military metaphor begins to acquire negative implications: when the disease is visualized and personified as the hostile other, the patients, the carriers of the illnesses, are also put to blame and, in consequence, stigmatized. The stigma is even greater when one focuses on the way in which AIDS spreads and uses the older metaphor, coined mainly for syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases, in which the polluted body of the patient threatens, infects and in consequence destroys other people. The example of such fear may be found in Edmund White's *Farewell Symphony*, in which a thoughtless act of revenge involves informing the landlady of the infected man that "the *professore* is very ill with AIDS (which the Italians pronounce as

though it were "the ides" of March). You must get the maids to fumigate everything when he leaves. The Ides are very contagious." (White 476) To make matters worse, the stigma of AIDS is not imposed merely by "the general population" - other gay men, those who have not been infected yet share the feeling of adversity towards those, who are already ill:

You know there is no way I could tolerate that situation. It was bad enough on the ship, the pills eight times a day in twelve different combinations, everything gets written down (...) You thought I was going to drop dentistry and become a full time *nurse* ? Are you crazy? Where did you get that idea? (Ingenito DeSio, in *Men on Men*, 163)

According to Sontag, the discourse of AIDS is characterized by thinking in terms of "stages":

What is called AIDS is generally understood as the last of three stages - the first of which is the infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and early evidence of inroads on the immune system - with a long latency period between the infection and the onset of the "telltale" symptoms. (Sontag 109)

The "staging" is responsible for giving the autobiographical novel the most obvious AIDS-related, three-part structure - the first, in

which the central character grows up, comes out and starts to enjoy the sexual carnival of post-Stonewall gay liberation of the 1970s (and most probably gets infected), the second, in which the epidemics is heard of in the early 1980s and affects some distant acquaintances, and finally the third one, in which it kills a lover or a close friend. This before-and-after structure may be found in a number of texts, for example in David Feinberg's *Eighty-sixed* or Paul Monette's *Becoming a Man*. The same three- stage structure is also present in three subsequent books by Edmund White, namely *The Boy's Own Story* (childhood and adolescence), *The Beautiful Room is Empty* (adolescence and early adulthood) and *The Farewell Symphony* (maturity).

Another important issue to consider here is the question of the public reception of the illness. Sontag notices that many previous lethal diseases, such as tuberculosis, were regarded sentimentally, as afflictions that touch "the hypersensitive, the talented, the passionate". Such a line of thinking is not possible in case of AIDS because "no compensatory mythology has arisen, or seems likely to arise. AIDS, like cancer, does not allow romanticizing or sentimentalizing, perhaps because its association with death is too powerful" (Sontag 112). It is, however, possible to claim, that it is not the fear of death or suffering that is dreaded by most of the patients, but the fear of the suffering which deprives them of their humanity or

the ability to think logically. And indeed, such worries are frequently expressed by gay writers. Edmund White says:

His head (and to a much lesser extent his computer) was full of notes, quotations, projects, comparisons, often followed by a question mark. I think he knew perfectly well that most cases of AIDS involved some dementia, and he must have been terrified that all his knowledge, so painfully acquired after thousands of hours of research would be lost over the course of a weekend. (*Farewell Symphony*, 474)

The feeling of fear and frustration is further magnified by the unavoidable impression that the writer is the last one to be alive, alone with his worries and suffering. Paul Monette ends his *Becoming a Man* novel saying: "the fevers are on me now, the virus mad to ravage my last fifty T cells. It's hard to keep the memory at full dazzle, with so much loss to mock it. Roger gone, Craig gone, Cesar gone, Stevie gone. And this feeling that I am the last one left, in a world where only the ghosts still laugh" (Monette 278).

This omnipresent feeling of doom has shaped the very *form* of new gay writing - the majority of books are shorter than most non-AIDS mainstream novels as if the writers, who are also infected, realised there may not be enough time to write more. In the Introduction to the

eighth volume of the *Men on Men* series David Bergman observes:

In 1986, when the first volume appeared, Dennis Cooper, a contributor, had published only one novel and Kevin Killian, another contributor, none at all. AIDS had only begun to shrink the ranks of gay men. But now, 16 years later, a third of the authors in that first volume have died of AIDS. (Bergman 7)

The literary response towards AIDS seems to have evolved with time and it reflects social changes mentioned in the first part of this article. The first wave of writing, appearing in the mid -1980s, was dominated either by the lack of belief that the tragedy the doctors and journalist are trying to warn the gay community against is actually happening or by violent expressions of anger at the injustice of the disease's selectiveness. This rage might of course be considered the sign of the process of grieving, either individual or collective. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) and *Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud wrote that the unfinished process of grieving he called melancholy is crucial to the formation of the ego. The identifications, which are formed due to the unfinished grief, are the ways in which the lost object is incorporated and later preserved in the ego:

An object which was lost has been set up inside the ego - that is that an object-cathexis had been replaced by an identification.... Since

then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and it makes an essential contribution toward building up what is called its "character". (*Mourning and Melancholia*, 28)

Therefore, what Freud calls "the character of the ego" becomes a monument to the lost objects and, as such, leaves the grief unresolved. He further adds that the only way of letting "the object go" is to break the old attachment and try to build a new one. However, in *Ego and the Id* Freud makes room for another possibility, namely that melancholic identification may be the *prerequisite* for breaking the attachment, or, to be more precise, for the incorporation of the attachment *into* the ego. Following on from that we can assume that the loved object is never entirely lost; it becomes an internal part of the ego and allows for postponing the recognition of suffering and loss. Yet it would be interesting to ask what happens when the lost loved object is of the same sex and the attachment is culturally prohibited from the very beginning.

In the essay entitled *Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification* Judith Butler observes, that heterosexuality is cultivated through a series of prohibitions and one of these is the repudiation of homosexuality. Therefore, in our culture it is theoretically impossible to form homosexual attachments - they are by definition

forbidden and even if they do emerge "on the far side of the censor, they may well carry that mark of impossibility with them, performing, as it were, as the impossible within possible. As such, they will not be attachments that can be openly grieved" (Butler 89). This assumption becomes a serious problem when we take into account the death toll of AIDS and the seemingly endless number of deaths. Due to the fact that the grief remains unspeakable, the rage over the loss, by the very virtue of not having been expressed, can double. If the rage is prohibited as well, it can even reach suicidal proportions. Butler, however, believes that there is a solution to the problem of the unresolved grief and of controlling the rage. She observes the emergence of what she calls "collective institutions for grieving" and claims that they are crucial to the survival of the gay community. She uses the example of "die-ins" by Queer Nation, which means "traditions of cross-dressing, drag balls, street walking, butch-femme spectacles (...) drag performance benefits for AIDS (...) the convergence of theatrical work with theatrical activism, tactical interruptions of public forums by lesbian and gay activists in favor of drawing public attention and outrage to the failure of government funding of AIDS research" (Butler 233) to prove that by making the death spectacle public it is actually possible to *express* or to *perform* the grief, which would otherwise remain suppressed. For similar reasons gay funerals are frequently a bizarre combination of contrasting styles where grave speeches of mourners are mixed

with disco music and slide shows, and are often followed by a party-style wake. In *Ecstatic Antibodies* Simon Watney observed that since the traditional funeral scenario remains reserved for the heterosexual couples, while gay men had to invent their own way of expressing grief, and learn how to mourn the dead in their own way, creating "a gay cultural festival out of the acts of remembrance". Literature, or the very process of writing, may also be considered the way of expressing grief or of "speaking about the unspeakable".

The second wave of AIDS writing, on the other hand, is characterized by activity and the attempts to "tame" the crisis and analyze its influence both on individuals and societies. I do not mean to say that people have already *accepted* the inevitability of the illness, but I think that they have learnt to *adjust* to the new situation. As Vito Russo commented on a conference: "I am here today to speak out as a PWA who is not dying *from* - but for the last three years quite successfully living *with* - AIDS". (Russo 408) Therefore, more recent writing consists of the relations of people who came into contact with the disease, yet they decided to linger on and not to give up love and hope.

In order to explain the last statement, I would like to concentrate on Monette's *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir*, which, in my opinion, best defines what AIDS means to a gay man tragically touched by

the disease. The memoir is devoted to the loss of Monette's partner Roger Horwitz and his nineteen-month-long struggle with the disease. Monette, HIV positive himself, says on the first page of the novel: "I don't know if I will live to finish this. All I know is this, the virus ticks in me" (*Borrowed Time*, 1). The novel begins with the gradual insertion of AIDS into the protagonists' lives, with numerous telephone calls from friends telling of some other friends being sick or dying within the snug world of the rich, southern California gay community and when AIDS appears to be surrounding the world of the two lovers, one of them, Roger, is diagnosed with *pneumocystis* . Monette refers to this day as the day they "began to live on the Moon" and he claims that from that moment on his life got to be circumscribed by two dates - the day of the Diagnosis and the day Rog died. We learn that the illness shattered their otherwise blissful life of devoted love and affluence, which had previously sheltered them from other forms of suffering and prejudice. After Roger died, Monette was left grief-stricken and angry at the insensitivity of many doctors and the disease itself, yet still capable of articulating the fury and extracting the harrowing beauty out of the pain he must have experienced. He also continued writing, believing that

Every memoir now is a kind of manifesto, as we piece together the tale of the tribe. Our stories have died with us long enough. We mean to leave behind some map, some key, for the gay and lesbian people

to follow - that they may not drown in the lies and in the hate that pools around.(Monette 2)

This quotation explains why Paul Robinson called Monette "one of the major public voices through which gay community expressed its pain and rage" (Robinson 366).

The picture of modern, AIDS-related fiction would not be complete without the specific kind of autobiographical novels, namely the memoirs. Although the autobiographical (or pseudo-autobiographical) novels have a lot in common with AIDS memoirs, they also have some distinctive feature. I believe that Andrew Tobias' *The Best Little Boy in the World* (1973) or Edmund White's *Boy's Own Story* (1982) may be considered examples of such classical autobiographies. They are both what might be called "narratives of the closet" and they begin with the account of various oppressions, both social and psychological, which the protagonists have to put up with. The closet has, of course, many guises. In the case of Tobias the main emphasis is placed on the body which, homosexual desire having surfaced, shuts down and does not absorb any internal, physical stimulation. White's novel concentrates on cultural and social repression - the inability of both the protagonist and his surrounding to accept his different desires and the attempts at taming them. We are also presented with the

account of all actions the protagonists undertake trying to pass as straight individuals - they decide to pose as clowns, intellectuals or artists, all in order to avoid being exposed to the threat of being a plain "sissy". Both novels describe the protagonists' progress towards gradual self-acceptance and announcement of their new gay identity. The motif of coming out and the progress towards acceptance may also be characteristic of many AIDS memoirs, yet they seem to focus more on the psychological analysis of the protagonist, his feelings and his motivation. Writers like Andrew Holleran, Edmund White and Paul Monette finish their literary career with the very personal accounts of the plague years and talk openly about the experienced loss and confusion. Paul Robinson, the author of *Gay Lives*, claims that for many of these writers AIDS constituted both a personal tragedy and a literary salvation. Discussing Monette's *Becoming a Man* he adds:

The disease gave Monette his great subject, which he embraced with polemical zeal. Without AIDS, which galvanized his creative energies, he would probably have remained a middlebrow novelist of minor repute rather than what he in fact became. (*Gay Lives*, 366)

In this article I have tried to analyze various metaphors, reasons and attitudes towards "writing AIDS". However, as AIDS literature treats a very serious subject, critics of the genre face a dilemma which was

best expressed by Judith Pastore:

No matter how inferior a work on AIDS may be, if it helps alleviate suffering and prejudice, it still has intrinsic value. One feels petty pointing out aesthetic weaknesses given that the work may help those who live the disease. (Pastore 40)

Thus, it is impossible or at least unfair to disregard many of the novels on the basis of their "aesthetic weaknesses". AIDS fiction should be judged according to its other merits or purposes which were well-defined by Joseph Cady, one of the contributors to the influential *Writing AIDS: Gay Literature, Language and Analysis*. Cady observed that all AIDS-related literature can be divided into two types, namely *immersive* and *counterimmersive*. According to him in *immersive* writing readers are "thrust into a direct imaginative confrontation" with the horrors of AIDS and are required to deal with them with no relief or buffer provided by the writer. Counterimmersive writing, on the other hand, also describes the horrors of the disease but it focuses on characters at various stages of denial concerning AIDS. This type of writing also protects the readers from too harsh a confrontation with the subject through a variety of distancing devices, such as, for example, the ironic mode. Therefore, rather than give in and conform to the stereotype of either sad or dangerous "homosexual with AIDS" promoted by the

mainstream media, contemporary gay writers appear to celebrate it and appropriate it for their purposes. Despite the fact that the recent writing emerges from the AIDS crisis, it is not only about the compression of gay communities and their unavoidable annihilation. It is also about the potentiality of a life in the shadow of the epidemic, a life that is not limited to grieving.

Works cited:

- Berger, Maurice, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, eds. *Constructing Masculinity*, London: Routledge, 1995.
- Bergman, David and Karl Woelz, eds. *Men on Men 2000*, New York: Plume, 2000.
- Boffin, Tessa Gupta, Sunil, eds. *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*, - London: Rivers Oram Press, 1990, p.166
- Butler, Judith. *Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification* in: *The Judith Butler Reader*, Judith Butler, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Cady, Joseph. *Immersive and Counterimmersive Writing About AIDS: The Achievement of Paul - Monette's Love Alone* in: *Writing AIDS: Gay Literature, Language and Analysis*, - Murphy, Timothy and Suzanne Poirier, eds., New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Dewey Joseph. *Music for a Closing: Responses to AIDS in Three American Novels* in: *AIDS The Literary Response*, ed. Emmanuel S.

Nelson, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1990.
- Freud Sigmund. *Mourning and Melancholia*, London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2005.
- Hoffman, Alice. *At Risk*, New York: Putnam, 1988.
- Holleran, Andrew. *Ground Zero*, New York: William Morrow, 1988.
- Hollinghurst, Alan. *The Swimming Pool Library*, London: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Hollinghurst, Alan. *The Folding Star*, London: Vintage, 1994.
- Kramer, Larry. *The Normal Heart*, London: Methuen London Ltd., 1987.
- Kramer, Larry. *Reports from the Holocaust*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*, London: Nick Hern Books, 1992.
- Monette, Paul. *Becoming a Man*, London: Abacus, 1994.
- Pastore, Judith Laurence. *Confronting AIDS Through Literature: The Responsibilities of - Representation*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Robinson, Paul. *Gay Lives Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul - Monette*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Sontag, Susan. *Illness and its Metaphors and AIDS and its*

Metaphors, New York: Anchor Books, 1988.

- Watney, Simon. *The Spectacle of AIDS* in: *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, - Abelow, Henry, Michele Aina Barale, and David Halperin, eds., New York: Routledge, 1993.

- White, Edmund. *The Beautiful Room is Empty*, London: Picador, 1988.

- White, Edmund. *A Boy's Own Story*, New York: Vintage Books, 1982.

- White, Edmund. *Farewell Symphony*, London: Vintage Books, 1998.

Iwona Rentflejsz